DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 252 508 SP 025 697

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TITLE Curriculum Alignment as a Model for School Improvement.
PUB DATE Jan 83
NOTE 21p.; In: Anderson, Shirley, Ed. School Effectiveness: Climate, Goals, and Leadership. Summary and Proceedings of a 1982 Regional Exchange Workshop. p15-27. For the complete proceedings, see SP 025 695.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Techniques; *Cooperative Planning; *Curriculum Design; *Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; *Instructional Improvement; *Learning Strategies; Program Evaluation; Student Evaluation; Teaching Methods; Test Validity
IDENTIFIERS *Curriculum Alignment

ABSTRACT

The concept of "curriculum alignment" is based on the principle that, if instructional accomplishments are to be reliably obtained, three things must line up: instructional objectives, testing systems, and classroom instruction. The task of aligning a curriculum is described as requiring four attitudinal approaches: (1) Teachers and administrators need to know what it is that they are responsible for teaching; (2) Teachers need to make decisions about time, materia' , and teaching strategies appropriate for helping students lear he skills that are specified in the objectives; (3) Teachers should monitor the progress that they are making on implementing the plan; and (4) Teachers and administrators must assess the results of the school year, identify strengths and weaknesses, and incorporate the assessment into planning for the next year. A teachers' guide to curriculum alignment is appended. (JD)

CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT AS A MODEL FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

by Dr. Roger Scott

What is curriculum alignment? Basically, it's an idea: student learning will be most successful when the three elements of the curriculum are aligned. The three parts of the curriculum are: instructional intents (our objectives), classroom instruction, and assessment. We must know where we are headed, classroom instruction must be aligned with these goals, and we must have an assessment system that measures what we are expecting the students to learn.

Objectives

One of the things that I have been preaching for a long time is that we must start with objectives. We must know where we are going before we can get there. Most school districts have taken some steps to define what it is the students are expected to learn.

Assessment

Then there are the tests, and what do they typically test? They test some strange things. It is evident that they do not necessarily test what we are trying to teach. The technology of norm-referenced tests attempts to distribute the students according to a bell-shaped "normal" curve. Often we have an assessment system that does not match our objectives. It tests some of the things that are our objectives, but there are other objectives that it does not test at all. And it tests things for which schools do not have responsibility or cannot control. There are a lot of socioeconomic factors, language factors, and just general out-of-school learning that is being assessed on these tests.

Classroom Instruction

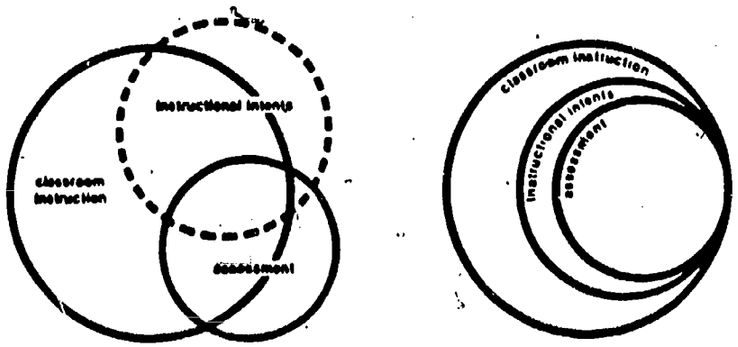
Classroom instruction typically focuses only on some of the districts' objectives for what the students should learn. And the classroom instruction only covers some of what is being assessed. It also includes a lot that is not a school's objective and a lot that is not measured. One result of this situation: teachers are not getting credit for a lot of the teaching which they are doing.

Curriculum alignment is a principle that says if instructional accomplishments are to be reliably obtained, three things must line up: the objectives, the testing system, and the classroom instruction.

The diagram shown below illustrates curriculum misalignment and curriculum alignment. This is a way to visualize what we are moving towards. There is a circle representing instructional intents or the objectives. Then there are circles representing assessment and classroom instruction. When these are moved together, we see the circles are not the same size. The objectives represent our list of what is most important to teach the students. We do not have to test the whole universe of instructional intents. We can test a reasonable sample of those things to find out how well we are doing. Therefore, this circle is smaller. Classroom instruction should give the students the opportunity to learn all of the intentions we have for student achievement, but it should do more than that. That is why the classroom instruction circle is bigger.

To Reliably Attain Instructional Accomplishments...

we move from this situation... **to this.**



Achieving Curriculum Alignment

How can school administrators and teachers go about the task of aligning a curriculum? Based upon our work with the Los Angeles Unified School District and a number of other districts throughout the nation, alignment efforts can be described as a four-step process.

Step 1 - Awareness of Instructional Objectives

Teachers and administrators need to know what it is that they are responsible for teaching. Los Angeles has an extensive list of essential skills to be taught at each grade level. We have found it useful to ask teachers to not only survey these objectives, but to work together and identify some objectives that need extra attention during the school year. We say, "You are responsible for all of these objectives, but let's look at some things

about which you are particularly concerned. An important way of setting these priorities is to find out how well the students are doing on the objectives." How can teachers find out? A good test will tell them; a test that matches the objectives. Fortunately, Los Angeles did have such a test, called the Survey of Essential Skills (SES). It matches very well with the grade-by-grade objectives.

Using the SES data from the previous spring, teachers could, at the beginning of the year, review how well things went last year in their instructional program. They could see their disappointments, but also they could be particularly proud of their achievements. Quite a bit different use of data than what we typically find.*

In Los Angeles, principals, as well as teachers, found some interesting payoffs in this activity. The principals must submit a school plan every year, and some of them started saying, "If I put all these lists of accomplishments and concerns together, and wrote a little descriptive piece about how they fit, I might have my school plan pretty much done, and I could legitimately tell the superintendent that the teachers were really involved in this plan."

The principals also found another use for the objectives that we didn't anticipate. At PTA meetings they began saying, "Our teachers have conscientiously analyzed where your children are as far as instruction is concerned and we have some things that we are particularly pleased about; how well your children did and how well our efforts helped the students achieve. Our students in general were very good in these areas," and they would describe a few of the areas.

Then they would say things like, "But we have some concerns. Our business is instruction and the students aren't doing well in certain areas, and we want to enlist your support as parents in these areas. We are going to do our best to improve the areas about which we are particularly concerned." Then they give an operational definition of some of the main areas of concern, particularly the ones that tracked across grade levels.

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*Editor's Note: At this point the workshop participants were divided into groups representing 4th and 5th grade teachers. The groups worked from the Survey of Essential Skills data to practice identifying skill areas for which the student performance was particularly good and areas which were of special concern, partly because of low scores.

This process is also useful from a district administrative standpoint. It can be used to focus instructional support for the schools. Instead of having a wide range of support services (everybody's trying to do everything for everybody), there can be an identification of areas which seem to deserve extra help. When you look at data from a district standpoint or in terms of clumps of schools within a school district, certain problems stand out. There can then be a focus on instructional support.

The objective writing by curriculum committees and the development of tests is one common strategy for Step 1, but there is an alternate way to approach this task. Remember, the first step is to consider where we are going in instruction, for what are we responsible as teachers, and how are we going to set some priorities.

The alternative strategy is particularly appropriate for schools that are not satisfied with their objectives for student learning and who don't have the resources to build their own tests.

First, a little background. We have been analyzing textbooks for a number of years, and it is interesting what is found in textbooks and what cannot be found. We started with mathematics and reading at the elementary school levels. We analyzed textbooks in terms of the critical skills (which we call "benchmarks").

Our criteria for analyzing the textbook were:

- all major textbooks devote at least three percent of the page content to a particular skill area; and
- the skill area must be important for success the next year.

In Appendix C, No. 1, there is an abbreviated list of reading and mathematics benchmark skills. The x's signify where a skill is a benchmark at a grade level. Using these benchmark skills to define learning objectives is an alternative strategy for Step 1, particularly since assessment materials that match these benchmarks have been developed.*

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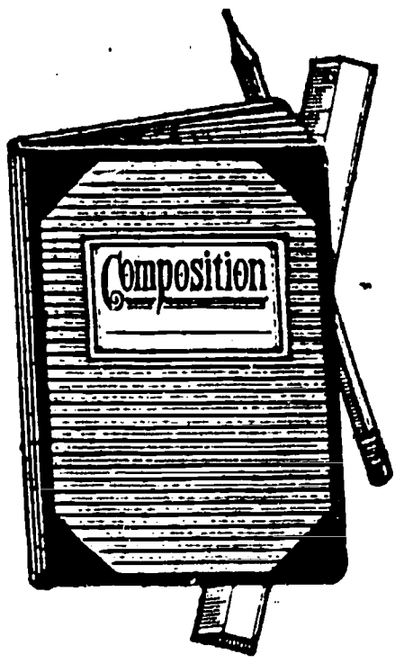
*Editor's Note: SWRL has developed the Proficiency Verification System, available in mathematics and reading for grades 1-6.



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Question: Are you saying that if a district wanted to begin to align the program, that they may begin with something like this?

Answer: Yes. I think it beats forming a curriculum objective committee and working for a year to try to reinvent the wheel.

Question: I'm wondering if just a listing of items that have been taught should occur first. For example, one of the things which we request is that teachers write down what they teach. We don't care what textbook they use, because what they teach is the real curriculum.

Answer: Is what they teach much different from the textbook they use?

Question: At times, yes. Everything that they teach is not in the textbook. It is in some textbook, but not in a textbook.

Answer: That would give you a handle on how much change might be needed.

Question: And that way you can make a textbook fit what you teach, rather than teach what you find in textbooks.

Answer: Yes, but I think the problem with that is, if you are picking a textbook that matches what people say they are expecting to teach in their lesson plans that they use every year, you risk not covering very well some of these areas that are significant for success next year. For example, if the student moves out of the district to another district, certain things are going to payoff for some students because some skills occur in every textbook. There are the high payoff areas in every textbook, and you want to make sure you cover those. I think the question is, "Where do you start?" or "On what do you validate it?"

We worked with a large urban school district (not Los Angeles, but another one), and we talked about the benchmark skills. But they decided that they would redesign their curriculum based upon a standardized test. That makes absolutely no sense. They should start with "What do kids really need to succeed in life, both in school and out of school?"

Question: I guess my question has to do with how to determine what the content authority list of skill areas

should be. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics has a content authority list. The different textbook publishers have their authority list on which they base the textbooks. There are programs which have different authority lists. Which is the right one? Which is the list? That is the fundamental problem with which we wrestle; because if we could come up with a content authority list that was in fact comprehensive and did represent what students should know, it would solve one of our major problems.

Answer: Sure, and you will never find it. There will always be another one out there that people will be pushing.

Question: I think that is why the question, on the point of whether or not you might have teachers themselves identify what they think is important for students to learn, is an important starting point. Then, you look for the resources which support the goals or objectives of the district as opposed to having some external source do this, whatever the source is: the textbook, the text, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, or some organization determining a direction.

Answer: Yes, but I am not sure either of those is a very good solution.

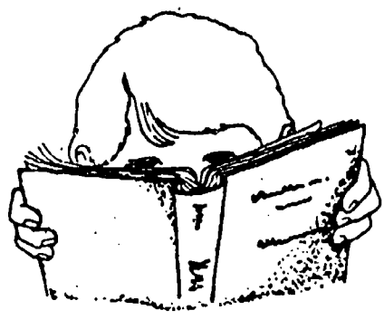
Question: What is the answer then?

Answer: There isn't any "The Answer." The way Los Angeles approached it was by defining all these outcomes and then getting a test designed to measure those outcomes. Another way to approach it is starting with the textbook and identifying benchmark skills. I am just giving two alternatives that seem reasonable. Both of them seem more reasonable than asking all your teachers to list what they teach and trying to make that list represent the district's objectives. I think some teachers don't have a good idea of what really needs to be taught in all the areas. They don't have the resources to do that kind of analysis, a task analysis or textbook analysis, or whatever else would be a reasonable analysis on which to base those decisions. It is just too much to expect teachers to do that. We typically try to do things by concensus and this is why the lists of objectives for districts are often very long. It is easier to get a concensus if we let everybody have their say. We put them all together and that is our list of objectives.

Question: Listing what they teach is just the first step. In their groups, we want them to answer the question, "What must be taught?"

Answer: Grade level groups of teachers work together on that?

Question: Yes, across grades and in some cases across buildings. That list gets smaller and smaller. Eventually we end up with a priority list of concepts or content areas which must be taught in every grade. What we're finding is the content is listed as benchmark. This allows the teachers to feel that they have been deciding equally. We find that this works very well. There is a major resource called PRIME, which has considered every textbook in mathematics ever published, and it has massive content authority lists based on every concept that has ever appeared. So, when teachers start to look at the universe of things that they're doing against something else, they have that system to draw on.



Answer: Okay, you do have those kinds of resources for that system.

Question: I will say this though. That process does cause a lot of discussion, I should say argument, among teachers as to what should be taught in each grade. But what it is pointing out is that we have variance among the grades regarding content.

Answer: I would like to react to what you have said. First of all, that seems to be another reasonable kind of way to go about this, very close to something about which Susan Everson and I were talking. She was relaying how they had worked with a school district where they gave the school district the information about benchmark skills. The teachers used that as one of their resources, like using PRIME in your case, as a way of starting to work through this objective process. I was telling her that I have mixed emotions about that, because on the one hand, I hate to see people reinventing the wheel. It's a lot of work and it takes a lot of time and expertise to do it and do it well. On the other side of the coin, when that is done as a group effort, there develops some comaraderie, some teamwork, and the teachers buy into it. These are their objectives because they have worked on them, and they are going to do something about it instructionally. If the objectives are just dumped on them, they may not have that commitment. So, I think that there are good and bad things about the approach of having the involvement of teachers in this process. If you do heavily involve teachers in the process, I would give them a resource like PRIME, or like benchmark skills so they won't be starting out from scratch. Typically, they don't start out from scratch anyway; they use the information from the previous year.

Question: There's one major place to which PRIME makes a contribution on the map you have given. Rather than an "x" at three or four grade levels, PRIME causes teachers to raise the question, "Do you introduce that concept at the level? Are you striving for mastery? Are you reinforcing?" The issue becomes then, not just whether it's being taught, but exactly what is the purpose of instruction at that particular point in time when the concept appears at a particular grade level.

Answer: That brings up the whole question of how teachers are expected to be involved in the management and in the planning of instruction. There is one body of experts who say that they are going to plan down to this micro-level, and that they are going to know what the teachers are doing every minute of every day, individually for every student and that they will have massive graphs and charts of this. Then the other group is saying that the teachers will just sort of go through the content without any information or tracking system. Most of us are someplace in between, not quite knowing where in between we should be. I don't have any solid answers for you. All I can say is beware of too much complexity that you dump on the teachers, particularly in the beginning. Remember, one of the first concerns people have is that a new process is overwhelming. And you want to avoid that kind of reaction because you can lead to rejection.

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Step 2 - Planning

Teachers need to make decisions about time, materials, and teaching strategies appropriate for helping students learn the skills that are specified in the objectives. In Los Angeles, we have one or more contact persons who are responsible for staff development in each school. We give them a notebook that walks them through this process of how they can do this with their teachers back in their school. We and the district provide the technical support for the trainers back at the school site on an "as needed" basis, and we monitor it pretty well too.

We suggest a number of staff activities that focus on planning. There are three main topics.

1. First, we have the list of skills that have been identified and the skills about which we are particularly concerned. Part of the planning considers when something is going to be

taught--when in this school year, when in the school semester, and what weeks some skills are going to be covered. For mathematics, written composition, or reading, teachers make a commitment about when the teaching is going to be done.

2. The second part involves how much instructional time is going to be devoted to a skill. We struggled with how this is done and we have made some mistakes. Finally, it was decided that the decision was on how many weeks or how many lessons does the teacher want to devote to this skill area during the year.

3. Finally, what materials are we going to use? A number of materials that show the relationship between texts and their objectives. Decisions about materials are not easy decisions to make. There must be some knowledge about prerequisites; some knowledge about where this information is in the textbook that is being used; and some knowledge about how effective the instruction really is.

Based on these activities teachers develop a plan for instruction, a plan that gives special emphasis to those skills about which they were particularly concerned. The result is their plan; not a plan that was dumped on them. It is one that they developed on the basis of their concerns.

That is the planning. Hopefully, it takes place right at the beginning of the school year and is based upon that first step of "What is it we're responsible for teaching?"

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Question: This planning occurs in each building?

Answer: Yes, and these are grade level groups doing the planning. "What are we going to do to make sure we cover all the skills about which we said we were worried, and the district said we had to cover this year?" It is grade level groups saying that it is their plan.

Question: So, what precedes this would be "the what or the content" of where the plan is now. There are two ways that you have done this. Where would we be with the simulation activity that we just did?

Answer: The way Los Angeles did it was to have a precise list of objectives and then have a test that was matched to that list. Your activity can be like Los Angeles did it. Just make sure everybody knows that list of objectives.

Question: So the "what" was decided before the test. That is where I was confused. I thought you were asking people to look at an item analysis or look at a test, look at the results, to determine the "what."

Answer: Okay, let's make sure everybody understands that.

Question: In other words, the document is in place. The document and curriculum are in place before the item analysis activity takes place.

Answer: Right, for Los Angeles, the list of objectives is the first stage. Then a decision is made to have a test that matches it. So you have already a precise list and an aligned test. That's one way to approach it. The other way is to look at benchmark skills and either get a Proficiency Verification System or some other way to find out how you're doing on those.

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Step 3 - Monitoring

Teachers should monitor the progress that they are making on implementing the plan. Then adjustments should be made in the instructional plans for the remainder of the year. There are two aspects of that to consider.

- The first one involves looking at the plan and asking "Have we taught it yet? If we haven't, that means we need to readjust the rest of our plan to make sure we teach it the rest of the year." We need to give teachers the tools to monitor their progress on the implementation of their plan.

- The other aspect is "How well are the students doing in acquiring those skills that we had hoped by this time in the year that they would acquire?" To assist the teachers with this aspect, we give them some supplementary practice which can be used for diagnostic tests.

Step 4 - Acknowledgement of Results

The final step, the fourth one, is to acknowledge and sum up the results for the year and get ready for the next year. We try to help people emphasize their accomplishments and their achievements. That is important for everybody's mental health. It is facilitated through an assessment system that matches what they are trying to do in a classroom. They end up in a much better position, because they can see the results. Teachers work hard all year long, and then they are all too often measured by an instrument that has little bearing on what they have been slaving over the whole year. Then it is printed in the paper as "Your school failed again!" A very discouraging kind of thing but this kind of a system, where the assessment is aligned with the curriculum, eliminates that problem.

It is important to have a summary of the year where teachers and principals take a little credit for some of the success.

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Question: If I were a superintendent of schools and my system was being evaluated by State testing codes, I bet you that I would be going with that test that matches the programs well.

Answer: I think states vary quite a bit and school districts vary in terms of mandated tests that they have to give students. Some of them are quite good and match pretty well with the benchmark skills. Others are norm-referenced instruments that are not very good matches with what educators are trying to do in the classroom. That is an unfortunate case.

Question: Please discuss training schedules.

Answer: We have built this into the schools' regular staff development program. The schools have some time during the school year that is set aside for staff development. We ask that they not do this type of activity in addition to the staff development program they normally do, but do this instead. This is the base program giving them the tools to do their job. It is that kind of substitution. There are problems in squeezing it into the time they have allocated. We find that some principals are terrifically inventive, and they may have a regular schedule four days a week, and then release the students a little early on the fifth day. They may schedule once every two weeks. The staff development modules which we built for them are very flexible, so they can squeeze them into a fifteen minute block or a thirty minute block. We try to accommodate all kinds of patterns that are existing. It is not one of those things where there is a massive dose of training. It is

not, "You have to spend two weeks during the summer to get ready for this one, and then we'll implement." It is meant to fit in with the work that is done. There must, however, be some time where teacher groups can work together.

Question: Is there any evidence that the success that you are achieving with this program is spilling over on the State test? Do you have any before and after scores to demonstrate that fact?

Answer: Yes, we do, and we have gotten gains in the SES scores. Our schools are above the district average in our progress on moving those scores higher on every subject matter at every grade level. We also have correlation evidence of the State test with the SES. It is quite high, so we are moving in that direction.

Question: Has there been any consideration how the program will educate parents?

Answer: Yes, we have proposed a brochure that would go to parents in which we explain what is happening and why it is happening. If that is well done, it would be a big step forward. Anything that can be done to help the schools communicate with our public is a big step forward.

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Let me tell you just one more thing about that last step. You also have to plan for the next year and set aside some time, hopefully at the beginning of the year. At that point the teachers will be at the place where they say, "You know, we should have done all of this a little earlier this year." Maybe a half day could be squeezed out at the beginning of the year.

Teachers begin to think about what skills students need and what can they do to make sure the students get those skills. That is what teaching is all about, and we hope we can push the secondary schools in that direction.

One additional comment about secondary schools. We are working with junior high schools now, and to be very blunt with you, it seems to me that secondary schools have the teachers who have an allegiance primarily to a subject matter area and less to education of students in specific skills. That does not mean that we give up. Still we can make big strides; we have longer to go and it is harder to get there.

I am writing a second draft of the major plan for a pilot program on how we are going to work with secondary schools next year. We hope to budge people a little bit, so that in certain key areas they will begin to think about how important it is to make sure students have a skill and that the instruction is related to that skill. If

that can be done for just a few key areas, some secondary people will change and hopefully they will start to generalize about the other things that they are teaching students.

The last handout (Appendix C, No. 2) is a teachers' guide to curriculum alignment.

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APPENDIX C:

Handouts to Presentation by Dr. Roger Scott

Mathematics Maps of Existing Programs

Identification of Skill Categories Tied to Maps of Existing Programs

Skill Area	Grade Level 1	2	3	4	5	6
recognition of whole numbers	x	X	X	X		
order and comparison of whole numbers	x					
addition and subtraction facts	x	x	x			
addition and subtraction algorithms		x	x	x		
multiplication and division facts		x	x	x		
multiplication and division algorithms			x	x	x	x
recognition of simple fractions		x	x	X	X	X
equivalent fractions						
comparison of fractions						
recognition and comparison of decimals and percents						
addition and subtraction of fractions				x	X	X
multiplication and division of fractions						
computation with decimals					x	x
measurement topics	x	x	x	x	x	x
problem solving			x	x	x	x
geometry	x	x				

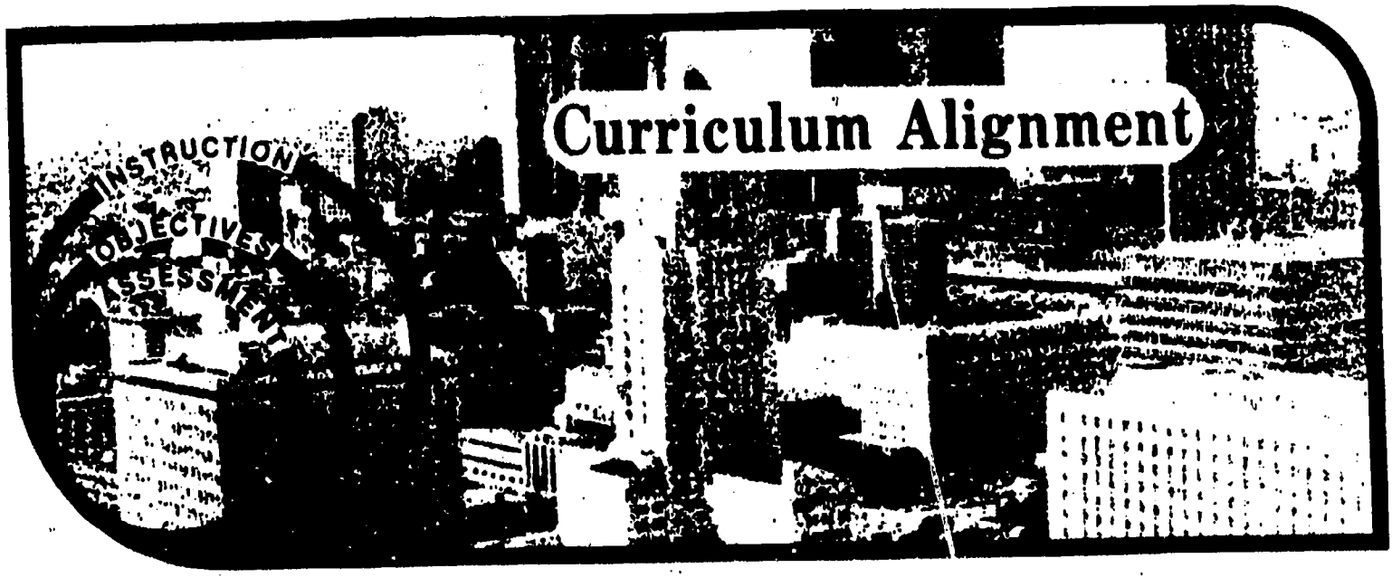
Skill Areas That Account for More Than 3% of Lesson Space in Existing Programs.

Reading Maps of Existing Programs

Identification of Skill Categories Tied to Maps of Existing Programs

Skill Area	Grade Level 1	2	3	4	5	6
letters	x					
simple consonants/vowels	x	x				
vowel digraphs, diphthongs	x	x	x			
vowel colored by r		x	x			
consonant digraphs and clusters	x	x	x			
variant c/g			x			
word recognition/meaning	x	x	x			
word meaning: definitions in context			x	x	x	x
word meaning: dictionary definitions			x	x		
word types				x		
word formation				x		
word derivation					x	x
structural analysis: plurals, compounds, possessives, -ed, -ing, -es, verbs	x	x	x			
structural analysis: inflectional endings		x	x			
structural analysis: contractions, prefixes, suffixes		x	x			
sentence meaning	x	x	x			
comprehension: main idea, detail, sequence, title		x	x	x	x	x
cause/effect, prediction/conclusion			x	x	x	x
comparison/classification			x	x	x	x
study skills: dictionary/index				x	x	x
study skills: reference materials					x	x
study skills: information organizers				x		
literary elements					x	x
literary types					x	x
literary analysis					x	x

Skill Areas That Account for More Than 3% of Lesson Space in Existing Programs.



Planning Instruction on Essential Grade-Level Skills

Curriculum Alignment activities help provide opportunities for students to learn essential skills appropriate for their grade level. By focusing instruction on essential, grade-level skills identified by the District, these activities can play an important role in improving student achievement in PHBAO schools.

Curriculum Alignment is based on the principle that instructional accomplishments can be more reliably attained when there is an alignment of: (1) instructional objectives, (2) instruction in the classroom, and (3) assessment information on instructional accomplishments. In other words, schools will be more effective when students are taught and tested on the skills we expect them to achieve.

The District has made Curriculum Alignment instructional planning possible in two ways. First, the District defined the essential skills students are expected to develop at each grade level. Second, the District has provided the Survey of Essential Skills (SES) that provides information about how well students have attained these skills.

Curriculum Alignment instructional planning involves the following steps:

- Becoming familiar with the essential skills defined by the District for each grade level.
- Identifying priority skill areas that may need additional instructional emphasis during the school year.
- Planning instruction and making notes on how priority skills will be emphasized.
- Conducting instruction and periodically checking progress to ensure that students are learning the essential skills identified for their grade level.
- Taking time at the end of the school year to identify and acknowledge the year's instructional accomplishments.

Step 1: Becoming Familiar With Essential Grade-Level Skills

The District has established a policy that students should learn specific essential skills as they advance through school. To implement that policy, essential skills that students should learn at each grade level have been identified. For instruction to be fully effective, it is important for teachers to become thoroughly familiar with and provide necessary instruction on these essential skills.

There are many sources of information that list or describe the essential skills. Three such sources are:

- SES printouts (which include the skills assessed at each grade level)
- Abbreviated lists of grade-level skills and sample assessment items
- The *Elementary School Curriculum: A Balanced Program*

Step 2: Identifying Skill Areas That May Need Additional Instructional Emphasis

This Curriculum Alignment activity involves examining the essential grade-level skills to identify those skills that should receive special attention during the school year. In setting priorities, there are several important sources of information, including a teacher's experience and judgment, school and District priorities, and the results of last year's SES administration. The SES results can be used in at least two ways. First, information about last year's students may indicate which grade-level skills were successfully taught and which skills may require more emphasis. Second, information about incoming students may indicate major areas of weakness that should be addressed.

Some questions to consider in establishing instructional priorities include:

- In what skill areas are incoming students weak?
- Which of these skill areas are important prerequisites to learning other grade-level skills?
- What skill areas are inadequately covered in instructional resources?
- What skill areas will require a substantial amount of classroom attention if instruction is to be successful?

Step 3: Planning Instruction and Noting How Priority Skill Areas Will Be Emphasized

This activity is designed to help plan instruction so that all students receive adequate instruction in essential grade-level skills. During the school year, most students receive instruction in most grade-level skills simply because they are participating in the grade-level instructional program. But, it is important to plan instruction to help ensure that every student receives adequate instruction in all grade-level skills.

Some planning considerations include:

- **Strategies.** Are new or improved teaching strategies needed to effectively teach certain skills? Can grade-level skills be taught or reinforced during instruction in other subjects?

- **Instructional Materials.** Is textbook coverage of grade-level skills adequate? Will supplementary materials be necessary to adequately address certain skill areas?

- **Time.** How much time will be needed to effectively teach grade-level skills to all students? What interferes with the time devoted to teaching grade-level skills?

During planning, each priority skill area should be given special consideration. Notes should be made regarding the instructional strategies, materials, and time that will be devoted to each skill area that will be given special emphasis.

Step 4: Checking Student Progress in Learning the Essential Grade-Level Skills

It is important to continuously monitor progress in teaching grade-level skills throughout the school year. This activity encourages taking the time, around mid-year, to more formally review progress in carrying out plans for teaching grade-level skills. As part of checking progress, student progress is reviewed. Checking progress involves determining whether all students have received instruction in the skills taught thus far, whether students have successfully learned those skills, and if priority skills have received the special emphasis that was planned.

When checking progress, needed modifications in the instructional plan can be defined. Around mid-year is also a good time to determine if the instructional strategies, materials, and time that have been specified for teaching the remaining skills are adequate.

Step 5: Acknowledging Accomplishments and Planning Next Steps

The end of the school year is an appropriate time for reviewing success in meeting instructional objectives and the students' success in learning grade-level skills. The following questions can be considered:

- Did all students receive instruction in all grade-level skills? Did students successfully attain grade-level skills?

- Were our objectives (the essential grade-level skills) clearly defined for students and parents?

- How successful were we in addressing priority skill areas?

- Should our instructional planning be changed during the next school year?

- What actions should be taken between now and when school starts to improve teaching of the essential, grade-level skills?

The Curriculum Alignment instructional planning process was designed to help teachers analyze the problems encountered in teaching grade-level skills, and to develop a plan of action for minimizing or eliminating those problems.

School- and Grade-Level Planning Meetings

Curriculum Alignment is a tool that can help the entire faculty work together to improve the instructional program. Many of the activities that have been described can be completed in schoolwide faculty meetings or in grade-level meetings. It is often particularly helpful for teachers to work through the activities in grade-level groups. Grade-level groups can frequently identify common priorities, plan instruction cooperatively, and share strategies and resources for effectively teaching grade-level skills. In addition to these benefits, Curriculum Alignment activities can help to increase communication and commitment to effective instruction in the essential grade-level skills.

Resources Available for Facilitating Curriculum Alignment Instructional Planning

There are a variety of resources available to help teachers and administrators implement Curriculum Alignment instructional planning at their school.

The *Curriculum Alignment Guide* provides information about Curriculum Alignment and numerous suggestions for conducting school-level instructional planning activities. The Guide includes presentation outlines for conducting school- and grade-level instructional planning sessions. It also includes information related to each step in the instructional planning process, overhead transparencies, and follow-up suggestions.

Curriculum Alignment Instructional Planning Sheets provide one possible format for teachers to use in making notes about their instructional planning. There are separate planning sheets for each grade level (K-6) and each subject area (reading, composition, and mathematics). They provide a list of the essential skills for the grade level, a space to designate priority skills, and a space for instructional planning notes.

The District also provides *SES Reports* each year, along with guidelines for using SES results. In addition, the District publishes the *Elementary School Curriculum: A Balanced Program* (the comprehensive listing of all grade-level skills), specimen sets (sample assessment items for the essential skills assessed at each grade level), and a variety of other instructional planning resources.

Curriculum Alignment is a collaborative project of the Los Angeles Unified School District and SWRL Educational Research and Development.